

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03495 161600Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3495

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PFOR CSCE SHUM UR
SUBJECT: ARREST OF ANATOLIY SHCHARANSKIY

REF: MOSCOW 3001

SUMMARY: JEWISH REFUSENIK SPOKESMAN AND CSCE OBSERVATION GROUP MEMBER ANATOLIY SHCHARANSKIY WAS DETAINED BY KGB PLAINCLOTHESMEN EVENING OF MARCH 15. THIS STEP IS UNDOUBTEDLY RELATED TO IZVESTIYA ARTICLES (MARCH 5) LINKING JEWISH DISSIDENTS WITH CIA THROUGH EMBASSY. IT MAY POSSIBLY ALSO BE CONNECTED WITH RELEASE OF SHTERN. SHCHARANSKIY'S DETENTION REMOVES AN UNUSUALLY INTELLIGENT, ACTIVE DISSIDENT FROM SCENE. IT IS MAJOR BLOW TO BOTH JEWISH AND CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS. IT ALSO MEANS LOSS OF ONE OF EMBASSY'S BEST SOURCES. SHCHARANSKIY'S COLLEAGUES REPORTEDLY PLAN TO REQUEST PUBLIC STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT CARTER IN PRESS CONFERENCE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 16. END SUMMARY.

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SHCHARANSKIY IS BEING HELD BY THE KGB (NOT THE POLICE) AND IT IS THE KGB (NOT THE PROCURATOR'S OFFICE) WHICH IS HANDLING HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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CASE. SHCHARANSKIY WAS TAKEN AWAY IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO AMERICA CORRESPONDENTS AS HE LEFT THE APARTMENT OF REFUSENIK VLADIMIR SLEPAK. SHCHARANSKIY HAD BEEN LIVING WITH SLEPAK SINCE MARCH 4, WHEN HIS PREVIOUS ROOMMATE, SANYA LIPAVSKIY, PUBLISHED HIS "EXPOSE" AS AN OPEN LETTER IN IZVESTIYA (REFTEL). WHILE THERE IS A SLIGHT POSSIBILITY

THAT SHCHARANSKIY HAS MERELY BEEN DETAINED FOR QUESTIONING, WE GATHER THAT SHCHARANSKIY'S BROTHER WAS TOLD BY THE KGB THAT ANATOLIY WAS BEING HELD FOR INVESTIGATION "IN CONNECTION WITH CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST THE SOVIET STATE." THIS IS A STANDARD RESPONSE IN SUCH CASES, BUT IT IS SIGNIFICANT AND SERIOUS THAT THE KGB AND NOT THE MOSCOW PROCURACY IS HANDLING SHCHARANSKIY'S CASE.

2. ONE JEWISH DISSIDENT SOURCE TOLD US THAT SHCHARANSKIY'S ARREST SHOULD BE SEEN "AS A SWAP" IN CONNECTION WITH THE RELEASE OF DR. SHTERN FROM PRISON. OUR SOURCE OBSERVES THAT THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE DECIDED TO RELEASE SHTERN BECAUSE OF A MOUNTING WESTERN OUTCRY OVER HIS IMPRISONMENT. HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE TO DISSIDENT JEWS IN THE USSR THAT THE SHTERN RELEASE SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS INDICATING A GENERAL SOFTER LINE, THE AUTHORITIES DECIDED TO ARREST SHCHARANSKIY. THIS IS PLAUSIBLE, BUT IT IS EQUALLY PLAUSIBLE THAT THE AUTHORITIES DECIDED TO RELEASE SHTERN AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO SOFTEN THE IMPACT OF SHCHARANSKIY'S ARREST.

3. SHCHARANSKIY HIMSELF FELT THAT HIS ARREST WAS IMMINENT. HE HAS SAID THAT SINCE THE APPEARANCE OF THE IZVESTIYA PIECE HE HAS BEEN CONTINUALLY AND HARASSINGLY TAILED, BY UP TO EIGHT GOONS AT A TIME. IN A TELEPHONE CALL TO THE EMBOFF (PRESEL) MENTIONED IN THE IZVESTIYA PIECE, SHCHARANSKIY SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT HE WAS MOST CONCERNED WITH THE OPEN LETTER IN IZVESTIYA AND THE RELATED COMMENTARY, THAT IT WAS AN EXTREMELY SERIOUS ATTACK ON JEWS AND ON THE EMBASSY.

4. THE REMOVAL OF SHCHARANSKIY FROM THE SCENE DEALS A SERIOUS BLOW TO THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AT A TIME WHEN IT IS ALREADY IN SUBSTANTIAL DISARRAY. SHCHARANSKIY WAS EXCEPTIONALLY WELL INFORMED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DISSIDENT WORLD. HE WAS UNUSUAL IN BEING BOTH A PART OF THE JEWISH REFUSENIK COMMUNITY, WHERE HE WAS ACTIVELY INVOLVED, AND IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT, WHERE HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND OF THE HELSINKI OBSERVATION GROUP. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH MADE HIM THE FAVORED SPOKESMAN FOR BOTH THESE ELEMENTS IN THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT, AND ALSO MADE HIM THE PREFERRED INTERPRETER FOR ANDREY SAKHAROV. HIS DETENTION DEPRIVES THE MOVEMENT OF ONE OF ITS MOST FEARLESS MEMBERS. IT ALSO DEPRIVES

THE EMBASSY OF ONE OF ITS BEST SOURCES.

5. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SHCHARANSKIY'S DISSIDENT COLLEAGUES PLAN TO HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE AT 4:30 PM MARCH 16, IN WHICH THEY WILL CALL UPON PRESIDENT CARTER TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT IN DEFENSE OF THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT IN THE USSR. SAKHAROV REPORTEDLY IS ILL AND WILL NOT PARTICIPATE, ALTHOUGH HIS WIFE AND OTHER PROMINENT ACTIVISTS WILL. PARTICIPANTS WILL BE FROM BOTH THE "REFUSENIK" AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS. TOON

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